

COVID-19 AND CHILDREN

BACKGROUND

[COVID-19](#) is a virus spread through respiratory droplets or aerosols when in close contact with someone who is infected. This virus can often cause a mild illness, with symptoms similar to that of the common cold. It can also cause more severe illness, with symptoms such as pneumonia (infection of the lungs) or even death. We are also continuing to learn about long-term impacts of COVID-19 infection. Older adults and those who have chronic medical conditions are more likely to develop severe illness. COVID-19 tends to cause milder illness in children. Most people who become ill with this virus recover at home without the need for medical care.

Health Canada has now authorized the Pfizer vaccine for youth ages 5 and older (born in 2016 or earlier). This vaccine is very effective at reducing risk of COVID-19 infections and serious illness/death. We strongly encourage all children and adults 5 and older to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they are able to. To book an appointment at a local vaccination clinic, visit www.covidvaccineLM.ca or phone our COVID-19 Response Centre at **1-800-922-0096 ext 9**.

SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN

While many children have no symptoms (asymptomatic) or have mild symptoms when they have COVID-19, children are still at risk of developing severe illness or complications. They can also pass the virus on to others, even if they do not have symptoms. Symptoms of COVID-19 are listed below.

ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:



Fever (37.8° C or higher)



New or worsening cough



Decrease or loss of taste or smell



Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or fast breathing

TWO OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

- Headache
- Very tired
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches or joint pain
- Runny nose or nasal congestion
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (such as vomiting or diarrhea)

IF YOUR CHILD HAS ANY SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19:

- If your child's symptoms are severe or you are worried about your child, call 911 or go directly to your nearest emergency department.
- Due to the widespread transmission of COVID-19, there are not enough COVID-19 tests available for everyone who has symptoms. If your child has any of the COVID-19 symptoms listed above, assume they have COVID-19. Symptomatic individuals and any household members must self-isolate. Visit the [SWPH website](#) or www.ontario.ca/exposed to learn about self-isolation requirements.
- If your child has COVID-19 symptoms, one negative rapid test cannot rule out COVID-19 infection. If two consecutive rapid antigen tests, separated by 24-48 hours, are both negative, they are less likely to have COVID-19 infection. Your child should still self-isolate until symptoms are improving for at least 24 hours (48 hours for gastrointestinal symptoms).
- Call Southwestern Public Health's COVID-19 Response Centre at **1-800-922-0096 ext. 9** if you have any questions.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILD

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person-to-person through respiratory droplets or aerosols when in close contact with someone who is infected or in poorly ventilated spaces. Based on current evidence, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. One of the best ways to reduce your risk of COVID-19 is by getting the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as your able.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 BY TEACHING THEM TO:



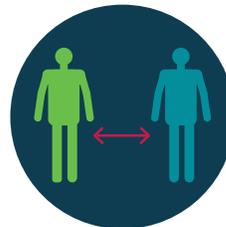
[Wash their hands](#) often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.



Sneeze and cough into their sleeve



Avoid touching their face, eyes, nose or mouth



Practice [physical distancing](#) (by staying 2 metres or 6 feet apart from people outside your family)



Help or ask someone to help [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched objects and surfaces



Avoid contact with people who are sick



Wear a well-fitted medical mask or three layer tightly woven non-medical cloth mask.



Stay home if they are sick

WHEN USING A MASK/FACE COVERING, ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- Cloth masks should be washed frequently and stored safely between uses.
- Wash your hands before and after using your mask.
- Do not share your mask/face covering with other people
- Masks/face coverings should not be put on children under the age of 2
- People who have trouble breathing should not wear a face covering

Learn more about current recommendations for masks on the Southwestern Public Health [website](#).

IMMUNIZATIONS DURING COVID-19

It is still important to ensure your children are protected from other vaccine-preventable diseases. Vaccines provided through schools will resume with school reopening. You can also talk to your healthcare provider about staying up to date on other routine vaccines for infants and children.

- Routine vaccines: infants and children
 - 2, 4, and 6 month vaccines (pertussis, tetanus, diphtheria, Hib, polio, pneumococcal and rotavirus)
 - 12 and 15 month vaccines (meningococcal, pneumococcal, measles, mumps, rubella and varicella)
 - 18 month vaccines (pertussis, tetanus, diphtheria, Hib, polio)
- Routine vaccines: adolescents and adults
 - Boosters and catch-up vaccines can be given if you are seeing your healthcare provider for other urgent issues
- Seasonal influenza vaccines when available



HOW TO SPEAK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT COVID-19

This is a very difficult time for children and their loved ones. Children may be worried about themselves, their loved ones and friends getting ill from COVID-19. Parents/guardians, family members and other trusted adults can play an important role in helping children understand the current situation in a way that is honest, accurate and minimizes anxiety and fear. The following resources are available to support you in talking to children about the pandemic:

- Children's Mental Health Centre: [Talking to Your Anxious Child About COVID-19](#) and [Tips for Supporting your Family's Mental Wellness](#)
- About Kids Health—Hospital for Sick Children: [COVID-19 Learning Hub](#)
- A book to support and reassure children: "[My name is Coronavirus](#)"
- If you or your child are having challenges coping during this time, reach out to your physician, the [Canadian Mental Health Association--Elgin County](#) or [Canadian Mental Health Association--Oxford County](#) or call [Kids Help Phone](#) for support

